

Voting Assistance Officer Best Practices

A list of the most notable best practices is provided below:

- a. USS LINCOLN Voting Assistance Officer (VAO) and a team of more than 25 Departmental and Divisional VAOs ranging from E-4 to Lieutenant Commander reached out to 3,000+ crewmembers and families with workshops, registration drives, All Hands Calls and Stand Downs.
- b. USS Kennedy sent a support team to the Commander, U.S. Forces Europe Postal Facility to assist with expediting delivery of over 500 ballots from deployed Sailors. Also, USS KENNEDY led the fleet with an aggressive voter registration campaign utilizing all forms of internal communications, all hands calls, voter registration drives, General Military Training (GMT) video programs and achieved an impressive 100 percent contact and a 72 percent voter registration turnout.
- c. USS Barry utilized every possible communications medium available and provided one-on-one voter registration support to more than 300 crewmembers and families. USS Barry then took its success, kicked it up a notch, and implemented a voter satisfaction survey to ensure no stone was left unturned.
- d. USS KITTY HAWK VAO helped more than 2,200 Sailors and family members register to vote by offering voter registration processing to Sailors during tax filing assistance season.
- e. USS George Washington VAO worked together with the Command Master Chief and Command Career Counselor to utilize the monthly command indoctrination classes for newly reporting personnel to provide voter registration information and processing.
- f. VFA 82 VAO supported 150 personnel interested in voting by ensuring 100 percent facilitation prior to deployment.
- g. Commander, Naval Reserve Force provided VAO support to more than 85,000 Selected Reserve personnel and families, particularly the thousands of mobilized/recalled members deployed in theater.
- h. Several afloat units and remote commands utilized Video Teleconferencing whenever possible, to increase the number of units and personnel who were briefed on voting information and other unit best practices.
- i. Recruit Training Command (RTC) Great Lakes VAO worked around the clock with assistant VAOs and company commanders to ensure hundreds of new active and reserve recruits in transit during the weekend prior to the Elections were registered and had submitted either an absentee ballot or the Federal

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Write-in Absentee Ballot (FWAB) vote prior to their travel. RTC VAO contacted elections offices on recruits' behalf to ensure their ballots were accounted for.

j. Each of the following ships and submarine VAOs reported working daily around the clock canvassing work centers, providing workshops, televised orientations to keep everyone informed and registered who wanted to vote (including all incoming and outgoing personnel and families as well):

USS Roosevelt USS Vicksburg
USS Benfold
USS Kaufman

USS San Juan USS Montpelier
USS Seawolf
USS Alexandria

Navy Voting Assistance Program Best Practices

a. Website and Database. Navy Voting Assistance Program (NVAP) maintained a constant link with VAOs through e-mails, phone calls and round the clock website and customer service support provided by the Navy Personnel Center Customer Service Center hotline, 1-866-U-ASK-NPC. NVAP launched a website providing push/pull technology. Website features include:

- Best practices
- Ordering supplies
- Link to the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP)
- Link to Voter Information Management System Database
- Link to electronic progress reports
- Directives and regulations
- FAQs and best practices
- State-specific election information
- Matrix showing registration and ballot return dates for each state
- Comprehensive information and voting registration outreach tool
- VAO Performance metric database measured weekly VAO contact and Facilitation to voting members.

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b. VAO Survey. Immediately following the Elections, NVAP was proactive and sent an electronic survey designed to provide answers to a Navy Inspector General Audit Report and to also serve as backup information for Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Manpower and Reserve Affairs) and FVAP. NVAP continues to collate data from the more than 1,000 completed surveys submitted by Voting Assistance Officers worldwide. Here are the key results:

- VAOs assigned at the appropriate grade level -O4/E-8 above (72 percent)
- UVAOs assigned at the appropriate grade level -O2/E-7 above (72 percent)
- VAO and UVAO training documented at the installation or base level (50 percent)
- Basic training and command courses emphasize/advertise voting (Yes- per RTC VAO)
- Provided enlistees with appropriate voter registration forms/support (Yes- per RTC and reporting Recruiting District VAOs)
- Train units preparing for deployment (Yes. SOP for many afloat units)
- Command/Ombudsmen network established to help provide voter information- (70 percent)
- Special day set aside for dissemination of voter information and material (79 percent)

Most of our VAOs utilized other events to tie-in voter registration drives such as pre-deployment workshops, GMT training venues, Closed Circuit Television Programs, Tax Preparation Workshops, etc.

- Organized voter registration drives/special events (96 percent)
- Supported Deployed members and families (Yes- based on the survey and VIMS Database)

c. VIMS Report. In addition to the survey, the following are results of our Voter Information Management System Database:

- 1,646 of 1,652 VAOs reporting (commands with >25 personnel) (99 percent)
- VAO training completed (98 percent)
- Does VAO have SF-76s (100 percent)

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- Does VAO have SF-186s (100 percent)
- Does VAO have 2004/2005 voting guide (100 percent)
- Has VAO distributed SF-76s to eligible voters (100 percent)
- d. A NVAP VAO Survey is used as a regular reporting tool. Survey questions are as follows:
 - Has VAO contacted 100% of command personnel including civilian employees, spouses and voting age dependents?
 - How many personnel contacted (including civilians, spouses and voting age dependents)? >25: >50: >100: >250: >500
 - Has VAO completed training (in-person or online)?
 - How many in-person training sessions conducted and total number of attendees for each per month or per quarter: >25: >50: >75: >100:
 - Does VAO have SF-76 (Reg. & Absentee Ballot Request)?
 - How many forms were hand-delivered? All personnel and families: Most of the personnel and their families (others obtained the forms online or via departmental representative): About half of all personnel and their families: none of the personnel or their families:
 - Does VAO have SF-186 (Federal Write-in Ballot/FWAB)?
 - How many forms were hand-delivered? All personnel and families: Most of the personnel and their families (others obtained the forms online or via departmental representative): About half of all personnel and their families: none of the personnel or their families:
 - Does VAO have 2004/5 voting assistance guides?
 - How many guides were hand-delivered? All personnel and families: Most of the personnel and their families (others obtained the guides online or via departmental representative): About half of all personnel and their families: none of the personnel or their families:
 - Has VAO met and discussed voting support effort with Postal Facility Manager (OIC or Leading Chief)?

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- Has VAO provided information in the following media? Plan of the Day, 1MC Announcement, All Hands Call, Base or ship's newspaper, Closed Circuit, Television (if available), Radio Station (If available)

- Has VAO conducted the following voter registration information workshop and if so, how many members per month or per quarter?

Command indoctrination Tax filing/preparation

GMT Training Stand-down
Predeployment Briefing

- Has VAO developed a continuity folder?

- For transferring VAO - Has your command identified a relief for you?

- What is your rank? 04: 03: CWO2-02: E7-E9: E5-E6: E5 or below:

- Did you partner with Command Master Chiefs, Command Career Counselors, Ombudsmen and enlist the support of Assistant VAOs to provide assistance?

- How many assistant UVAOs are assigned to you? None: 1-3: 4-10: >10:

- What is the maximum (or estimated) maximum number of potential absentee voters represented at your command (including civilians, spouses, voting age dependents)? 25-50: 51-100: 101-150: 151-300: 301-500: >500:

- Are you designated a UVAO in writing?

- Do you have a continuity file i.e. a VAO folder?

- Did you receive VAO or UVAO training?

- Was your VAO and UVAO training documented in your record or eval/fitrep?

- Did you provide absentee voting registration drives and provide information to your command prior to deployment? 24. Did you establish a designated location on base, installation, or ship where voting material & assistance is available?

- Did you set aside a special day/event designated for dissemination of voter information and material e.g. voter registration drives, stand-downs, GMT, All Hands Calls, etc?

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e. Polling. To accurately balance the performance metrics of VAOs against real-time feedback from members and their families, NVAP has implemented a quick poll among Sailors and families, and placed the following questions on both a career management tracking website, BUPERS Online as well as on portable polling devices at various Career Management Symposia throughout the fleet. NVAP is also in the process of sending these questions out to various fleet concentration area commands for posting on their command websites:

- Did you know that a voting assistance representative or voting assistance officer (VAO) was assigned to your command? Yes ___ No ___

- If so, did the VAO provide voter information to you either in-person, in a group e.g. voter registration drive, All Hands Calls, command indoc or through an online presentation? Yes ___ No ___

- Were you provided a Federal Post Card Application (SF-76) for absentee voter registration and absentee ballot? Yes ___ No ___

- Please rate the amount of voter awareness, publicity and information provided by the command VAO? Very little awareness; hardly any publicity and practically no information was provided ___ Some awareness, some publicity and some information was provided ___ A lot of awareness/publicity and information was provided ___

f. Voter participation. NVAP analyzed a sampling of commands that submitted after action reports to determine voter participation rates. Based on answers provided by VAOs regarding the number of SF-76 forms distributed, number of members supported, NVAP forecasted that about 74 percent of the potential Navy voter population of more than 500,000 active and reserve members actually voted this year. Anywhere from 6-8 members out of 10 who were contacted by VAOs proceeded with registration. Some VAOs, especially the deployed units reported even higher contact and facilitation rates due to their accessibility to their "captive audiences." While this percentage is not an approximation, but merely a forecast, NVAP is confident that the final results of the FVAP post election survey will substantiate a 70-75 percent overall Navy voter participation rate.

g. Navy Voting Best Practices Award Contest in 2005 Election Cycle. Five winners will be chosen from a field of more than 50 nominees provided by Echelon II Leadership.

h. VAO Letters of Appreciation. Beginning in the 2005 Election Cycle, NVAP will recognize the best of the best VAOs in the fleet with Letters of Appreciation (LOA). The best Echelon II VAOs will be awarded LOAs by CNPC; and LOAs for the best subordinate unit VAOs will be awarded by unit COs.

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i. NVAP to measure ROI. NVAP is placing 20 additional questions on VIMS database designed to measure ROI i.e. measure actual numbers forms delivered, training provided per person by VAOs, etc.

j. Getting the word out. The following communication products/methods were used consistently to promote awareness and drive voting participation worldwide:

- Provided non-stop toll-free and DSN Customer Service at 1-866-U-ASK-NPC

- E-mailed important voter registration updates to all Command Master Chiefs, Command Career Counselors and Ombudsmen overseas and on deployment.

- Developed educational presentations for command indoctrination courses, Pre-deployment Preparation Workshops, All Hands Information forums or All Hands Calls (delivered in person or aired on command public address systems, and closed circuit radio and television stations).

- NVAP published 2 Rhumblines Articles for senior leadership. Rhumblines is an online weekly Navy Operations, Logistical and Personnel Support Information newsletter sent from the Chief of Naval Information to all Flag level Commanders, Senior Civilians and other high-ranking officials.

- Commander, Navy Supply Command provided training for all postal facility employees on the proper handling and postmarking of balloting material.

- NVAP conducted 17 training workshops for VAOs, Sailors and families in the following fleet concentration areas: Yokosuka, Japan (Commander, Naval Forces Japan) Norfolk, Virginia (Commander, Fleet Forces Command) San Diego and Commander, Pacific Fleet) Naples, Italy (Commander, Sixth Fleet) Bremerton area (Commander, Navy Region Northwest) Jacksonville, FL (Naval Air Station Jacksonville)

- Sent 45 information e-mails (weekly messages) to 1,650 Echelon II VAOs from CAPT Contres, Division Director for the Navy Voting Program.

- Published 3 Navy News Stand Articles, reaching 175 deployed units (in theater) and 4 Fleet Concentration Area newspapers.

- Conducted 5 interviews with Reuter News Agency, Stars and Stripes, Navy Times, Virginian, Pilot, and a Norfolk TV Network News Affiliate.

- Utilized Bureau of Naval Personnel (BUPERS) Online quick polls to measure voting awareness among absentee voters. The information gathered was used to target on going communication efforts to fleet needs.

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- Conducted quick polling at 3 fleet concentration areas during the Navy Personnel Command-sponsored Career Management Symposiums. Polls were used as a strategic communications tool. Most notable feedback came from NAS Brunswick personnel, indicating their VAO provided impeccable, individualized support to 100 percent of the more than 350 Sailors and families.

- Conducted Voting Awareness and Information workshops at all "road show" speaking venues including:

- 10 Navy Alcohol and Drug Addiction Prevention Seminars.

- 7 Career Management Symposiums.

- 7 Navy OneSource Briefs.

- 8 PCO/PXO/CMC/SEA and other training pipeline briefs.

- Sent 3 General Administrative Messages (NAVADMIN) from the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) and the Chief of Naval Personnel (CNP) to the Fleet, which covered the following information:

- Stressed to all VAOs the goal of attaining 100% contact and delivery of voting materials by 15 Aug 04.

- Introduced VIMS database and stressed the importance of absentee voting and in-hand delivery of Federal Post Card Applications for absentee ballots.

- Engage leadership at all levels to stress the importance of voting and emphasize that every vote counts.

- Sent 2 All-Navy Messages (ALNAV) from the Secretary of the Navy, which emphasizing the right to vote and the importance of the command VAO.

- 5 Personal-For Messages from CNP to Commanders, Commanding Officers, and Officers-In-Charge were released and covered the following:

- Discussed the Navy Voting Program and importance of absentee registration.

- Emphasized the importance of Leadership oversight of Voting Program initiatives.

- Highlighted DoD directive 1000.4 requirements for VAOs.

- Highlighted requirement for VAO sign-up on VIMS database.

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- Established goals for VAO sign-up in the VIMS database.
- Posted 5 Navy Flag/SES Website e-mails from Commander, Navy Personnel Command to all Echelon II Commanders. E-mails highlighted the following:
 - Emphasized the opportunity to vote, and directed VAOs to make 100 percent contact by 15 August.
 - Provided VAO requirements.
 - Enlisted support from Echelon II VAOs in monitoring the VIMS database for compliance.
 - Announced the launch of the Voting Information Management System (VIMS) database.